

## [C. E. Kinsey]

[LM?] [S241 - LA?] DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln

DATE April [24?], 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore Stuff

1. Name and address of informant C. E. [Kinsey?], 649 N. 27th, Lincoln, Nebr.
2. Date and time of interview April [?] — 1:30 to 4 p.m.
3. Place of interview Home and jewelry shop of informant
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant None
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Workshop built into front of his dwelling. It is a tiny little room almost a “cubby hole” and apparently was planned to conform in size to the small stature of Mr. Kinsey, who is only about 44 inches tall. Room has a counter and jewelers work bench facing a sort of bay window. Its atmosphere is strictly that of [a workshop?]. A rack of watches hangs in the window where they can be seen from the street, whether these are genuine jobs or just decoys is hard to say but I pass there frequently and they somehow never seem to change in general perspective.

The dwelling house, which is of course the main building, is just an average residence type, neat, clean and in good repair. It might be said that the touch of a woman's hand

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is lacking since the occupant is a bachelor, but it has that 'housekeeper' look at least. Attached to the front of the shop itself is a sign which tells the world that: [C15 - [?]] "C. E. Kinsey Fine Watch Repairing Work Guaranteed 'Poor Man's Prices' Look Me Over, Etc.

Location is in the outlying business center of 27th and Vine streets and surroundings beyond the four corners are just average middle class residences with [those?] on the same street to the south of Mr. Kinsey's place, dabbling in some kind of business. One sign over a bare [porchless?] entrance to a big bleak-looking house, announces that here is: "[Clinkenbeard?]: Real Estate Dealer."

### FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS [3954?] Francis St., Lincoln

DATE April 24, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT C. E. Kinsey, 640 [W.?] 27th, Lincoln, Nebr.

1. Ancestry Scotch-Irish
2. Place and date of birth [Canton?], Ohio, 1875
3. Family Bachelor
4. Places lived in, with dates Canton, 1875-1885; Lincoln, Nebr., [?] [Wymore?], Nebr., 1883-[?]; Lincoln, [1884?] to date.
5. Education, with [dates Wymore?] and Lincoln grade school-1885-[1869?]
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Musician, entertainer, [ballyhoo spieler 1889 to 1908 jeweler?], 1908 to date.

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7. Special skills and interests Jeweler, mandolin and guitar player; [ballyhoos front spieler?].

8. Community and religious activities Not active but probably Protestant. Seems to avoid [the?] subject.

9. Description of informant He belongs to that group known as "little people" often erroneously and crudely referred to as dwarfs or midgets but a distinctly different type from these.

10. Other points gained in interview In his case the head, features and trunk are of normal or slightly larger proportions except as to length of trunk but the arms and legs are about half normal length and stubby. The heighth principally is involved with lacking. Has a very pleasing personality, sincere, mild and friendly manner, without pretense of self-importance or hurried impatience.

Bright, clear eye, good talker, mentally above average, alert and likes people. He seems cheerful and despite the fact that his physical build and proportions rather place him in another wold of the living, there is no trace of resentment, or inferiority consciousness as regards this.

These little people ordinarily all look somewhat alike, with course, heavy features, oversize heads, etc., but Mr. Kinsey has none of this and his features are clean cut and nicely proportioned. Complexion is clear, ruddy and generally speaking he would seem to be about fifty years old [instead?] of sixty-six. As he sits behind the counter and work bench, one would never believe but what he was of average build in every respect, except for the short arms and pudgy hands.

All in all he is a most interesting type and character to meet.

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Well now, I spent a good many years around Lincoln and saw and heard a good deal that was'nt just floatin' around on the surface . Of a necessity I had to be a pretty good mixer and in the entertainment and musical business one just naturally came in touch with all kinds of people and heard their stories and gossip. You speakin' of the dances reminds me of [the?] time I played with Scovie Seidell. He used to play the violin and call and chew tobacco all at the same time. He could hit a spitton nearly every time at ten feet and never [miss a call?] or note. That was one reason they all liked him. He had an easy way about him. We played lots of dances out around Davey and those Irish and Swedes were always fightin'. Speakin' of Davey makes me think of a funny deal up there onetime. It really happened and had a lot out of the ordinary angles to it.

At that time Davey was dry along with a lot of small towns over the state. It was all right though to ship the stuff in and the thirsty souls did a bit to this. But that was a slow business at best and most people you [knowdon't?] plan [drinking?] deliberately but mostly when they feel the urge, on the spur of the moment.

Well anyway, the liquor and beer dealers had a way of takin' care of that easy. They would ship cases of beer and whiskey and wine to the express agents in these dry spots consigned to Mr. Jones or Smith. Some were in full cases and some just single package. When someone decided he wanted a drink or supply quick, he would go down to the depot agent who generally handled the express and say 'my name is Jones' or 'smith,' or whatever they happened to be using at that place. 'I'm expecting a package by express C. O. D.' and usually describing it as beer, whiskey [or?] wine and the size he expected or rather wanted to get. The agent, of course would look around and bring out a likely lookin' 2 package. If it didn't suit the consignee they would discover another C.O.D. for Jones or Smith easy enough. When Jones was finally suited he paid the C. O. D. and had his liquor without bothering further.

Well there really was a man by the name of Jones lived away out northeast of there and he sure enough had ordered some [medicine?], linament or something from Omaha. It

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was to come C.O.D. Now this Jones was a red hot 'dry' and his wife was even more so. Anyway he showed up at the depot and went through what the agent thought was the regular gag of getting some liquor for "Jones." The medicine he had ordered hadn't come but that didn't mean a thing, to the agent, who handed him a package which was a quart of whiskey and he paid the C.O.D. and went on his way without paying attention to what he had. When he got home and opened it up, his wife ran him out of the house and broke the bottle. She wouldn't even let him explain and he had to hide out awhile. After he thought it over, he got all worked up and went back to the express agent at Davey and raised a lot of hell and threatened to have the law on them. The agent gave him his money back, he couldn't do much. Jone's wife, who had never heard of the scheme to sell liquor in a temperance town, wouldn't believe her old man and made it pretty tough for him. The story got out and those that knew the real Jones had a lot of fun over it and things were pretty miserable for Jones. He was the 'fall guy' of the whole business. Lincoln had a number of 'hot spots' in those days. The old [First?] National Bank Building had a gambling joint on the second floor and a sporitn' house on the third.

Josie Washburn used to run a house on south ninth and we played there some, and it was orderly enough but every so often the police would pull them all and take them up and fine them. That was the way they collected their license fees.

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The colored people had some big dances and get to gathers. They threw some big oyster suppers and Rach Chapman and myself used to play some for them and go to the feeds.

When Burlington Beach was opened it was quite a big event. They built a pavillion out over the lake, built a steamboat and toboggan slide and had things fixed up in great style. Big 'carry alls' pulled by four horses, hauled the people back and forth. The first woman who dared to slide down the toboggan into the lake was to get a \$50.00 prize. Just before she make the attempt they had up on a slack wire act and the wire was left hanging over the

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water at the bottom of the toboggan. She made the slide in a toboggan boat and didn't see the wire. It caught her under the chin and broke he neck.

I did lots of ballyhoo and some pitch work for the fairs, carnivals and museums. Gene Coyle had a museum and hired me for front man and spieler entertainer. He had one of the first phonographs with the rubber tubes that you placed in your ears. People paid a nickel to hear those old cylinder records.

The first street fair in Lincoln in 1899 was a grand success with all sorts of booths and stands, "grifters," 'Kiester men", 'toy balloon vendors,' 'fortune tellers' and a 'lot of pit shows' and wax works, house of horrors'. 'street was roped off and no horse rigs were allowed.

The 'trocadero' in Omaha was one of the best known cabarets of the nineties. They call them "night clubs" and road houses now. We played there and I also played the first [Aksarbon?] and for 15 years thereafter that old song, 'she Was Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage' was a big hit and hung on a long time, about 1898 to 1901.

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'skip Down' was a 72 hour 'window sleeper' for Flint the hypnotist in those days and the Swiss Bell singers put on an act at the Eden Muses.

The Medical College had a dissecting room down by the Rock Island tracks and they used to keep a lot of 'stiffs' there. One time a fellow by the name of Williams wanted to go through and see how they did it. So a couple of students took him in and were going to show him the works. They had one negro corpse in there and the room was only dimly lighted with old gas flame jets. One of the students lifted and bent the body into a sitting position and then tied it there with a strap, which he fastened below the table. He got down in under there and waited . The other fellow steered Williams around and over to this corpse. Then he slipped away behind Williams and out of sight. He saw the stiff sitting there in the dim light and thought it was one of the boys so he started to talk to it. The

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other fellow hid under the table pulled on the strap and then let it go loose. The corpse settled back and one arm flew up. Williams grabbed at it and then he yelled and ran. He just about jumped through a window but the boys got to him and let him out.

Wyuka had one grave robbery while John Ruff was sexton there. In those days the Medical colleges couldn't get the bodies as easy as they do now, so they sometimes just stole them. The body they got was a big healthy looking chap who dropped dead on "N" street. They didn't know much about him but he was buried in Wyuka. Now John Ruff used [to?] make the rounds of the cemetery day and night and along midnight he came by this new grave and saw that it had been disturbed. Right then and there he called a grave-digger and they opened it up. The body was gone and the signs pointed to the Cotner Medical College. They got the law and went out there early in the morning. The students got real tough and tried to hold them off but it was no go and they found the body and took it back. Nothing much was ever said about this but it happened all right.

The police department had a lot of Irish cops then and they did some unusual police work. Two cops by the names of Pat O'shea and John Morrissey followed a suspicious looking fellow into a rooming house on "O" street one night. O'shea took his dark lantern and climbed up to look through a [transom?] into a room where they thought the fellow had gone. The bottom of the dark lantern fell out and falling into the room it set fire to the carpet. O'shea got excited and yelled to Morrissey "come on ye damned fool; the rooms' caught fire." They hurried out on the street and turned in an alarm then staid away till the fire engine and wagons came. Then they joined the crowd, demanding to know where the fire was.

One [time?] the soap works out at West Lincoln caught fire and Bob Malone who was Fire Chief, went out with his crew to fight the blaze. When they got there, Malone rushed into the building and across toward the stairs. He never got there. The soap vats were sunk in the floor and were about floor level. They were filled at the time with soft soap and Malone promptly fell into one. He couldn't get out and they had to pull him out with a pole.

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Jim Malone, brother to Bob, was chief of police for years. he arrested Charley Tracy who was hack driver in Lincoln and pretty well known character elsewhere by a different name. It seemed that this Tracy had a fare one night and the fellow, about half-drunk, flashed a [\$5.00?] bill. Tracy grabbed at it and it tore in two. Each had half. The fellow got out and called Malone and Tracy eventually got seven years in the pen for stealing half of a five dollar bill. There were three desperadoes who hung out around Lincoln some. John Stopher and the 'two Johns' they were known as. The two were brothers by the 6 name of Johns . One day they showed up in a barroom at 15th and "O" Street and somebody called Malone. He came pretty soon driving a buckskin pony and buck board. Stopher and the two Johns ran out and started east down "O" Street. Malone chased them and they turned north toward the fair grounds. They got into a dead end trap and Malone closed in. But they faced him and shot his horse and got away. Later a city detective shot one of the "two Johns" from [Keeps?] barroom on North 12th. Stopher came back to Lincoln and one day walked up to Malone and offered to buy some lots he owned out on the north side on 14th Street. Malone sold them to him and Stopher settled down. He had turned Mormon.

When telephones came into general use, people used to think the wires were hollow and one fellow offered to bet me they were. In 1908 I began to see that it would be better if I had a place and business to settle down in and as the jewelry business seemed naturally fitted to me I started to work into it as fast as was possible.